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Re: COVID -19

The situation regarding COVID-19 continues to evolve on a daily basis. There are now 19 documented cases in Alberta and Health Canada is reporting a total of 93 cases in Canada as of March 10. They emphasize that the risk to Canadians remain low. Having said that, we need to be proactive in taking steps to contain the spread of the virus. The priority for PGME is to ensure that all resident physicians and faculty remain safe and healthy.

I am going to provide a number of updates and outline PGME strategy in point form below:

1. Royal College Spring Certification Exams

The latest information available is that the RCPS plans to go ahead with all spring examinations. In the event that a candidate is not able to attend the exam due to quarantine, self-quarantine, or “leave restrictions from the hospital” the RCPS will refund the exam fee and allow the candidate to defer the exam without losing an examination attempt. Questions or enquiries regarding exam deferral should be directed to candidates@royalcollege.ca.

2. College of Family Physicians of Canada

The College is planning to move forward with the spring examination schedule as well. It is recommended, however, that candidates check the website frequently for updates (www.cfpc.ca) as this is a fluid situation and it is possible that cancellations could occur.

CFPC has advised that a candidate may need to cancel the exam for any of the following reasons:

- Have travelled to, from or through a travel-advisory area in the world with 14 days of their examination date;
- Have been advised by a public health authority to self-isolate; and/or
- Are experiencing current clinical symptoms of influenza such as fever or cough or respiratory symptoms.

In this instance the candidate will be asked to provide a self-signed affidavit identifying one of the above scenarios as the reason for cancellation. CFPC will transfer the exam fee to the next sitting of the examination.

If you suspect you may not be able to attend your examination please contact ccfpexam@cfpc.ca as soon as possible.

3. Residents Returning to Calgary From International Travel

For residents who have:

- traveled outside of Canada within the past 14 days; or
- had **close contact** with a person with an acute respiratory illness who had travelled outside of Canada in the 14 days before their illness onset; or
- had **close contact** with a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19; or
- had laboratory exposure to biological material (e.g. primary clinical specimens, virus culture isolates) known to contain COVID-19 virus

AHS has provided a guidance document for employees and physicians. Please consult this document for direction:

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-ncov-2019-traveller-guidance.pdf>.

I would also encourage you to visit ahs.ca/covid on a regular basis for important updates.

PGME is instructing residents returning from international travel to contact Workplace Health and Safety (1-855-450-3619) for direction prior to returning to residency training.

4. Social Distancing

As you know, social distancing is a critical containment measure to prevent spread of the virus. I have carefully considered the implications of social distancing and recognize that there may be some disappointment as activities are postponed or cancelled. The priority in all decision-making is the health and safety of residents, faculty, and patients.

In light of the above the following measures are being put in place:

- The **CMPA Resident Symposium** scheduled for March 25 and 26 is now **cancelled** after discussion with CMPA program leadership.
- All programs are asked to cancel plans for off-site retreats or workshops at least until end of April. I am aware that contracts have been signed with venues for these events. Please contact either Mabelle James (mabelle.james@ucalgary.ca) or Minjeong Kim (minkim@ucalgary.ca) for direction prior to contacting the venue.
- Out- of - country electives are a very valuable learning experience. In the context of COVID-19 several Canadian universities have already taken the step of cancelling all incoming and outgoing elective experiences. We have also made the difficult decision to implement this measure. I am going to ask residents to work with Program Directors to postpone or cancel upcoming international electives (including U.S.) Electives scheduled at Canadian centers may go ahead as planned.

Finally, please ensure that you have an up-to-date fitting for N95 masks and have been properly instructed in use of Personal Protective Equipment.

The current situation is stressful and challenging to manage because the landscape continues to change as the situation evolves. A reminder of available resources including the Office of Resident Affairs & Physician Wellness and Physician and Family Support Program offered by AMA **1.877.SOS.4MDS (767.4637) or 403.930.0529**

I will provide regular updates as more information becomes available.

Lisa Welikovitch MD FRCP
Associate Dean, PGME.



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